



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Heat Related Illnesses

<p>What are heat related illnesses?</p>	<p>According to the CDC, heat causes about 400 people to die each year in the US. Among those most at risk from heat related illness are the elderly, people with chronic illnesses, homebound people and children under 5.</p> <p>There are 3 stages of heat related illness:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms often occurring in the legs or abdomen. 2) Heat exhaustion is caused by the loss of large amounts of fluid by sweating, sometimes with excessive loss of salt. Most people can recover by resting in a cool place and drinking plenty of liquids. 3) If you don't recognize the signs of heat exhaustion, or ignore them, they could lead to heat stroke. This is the most serious of health problems associated with heat, it is life-threatening. Early recognition and treatment of heat stroke are the only means of preventing permanent brain damage or death. <p>There are factors that affect how we handle heat. If the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate quickly and this prevents the body from releasing heat. Age, obesity, sunburn, some medical conditions and medications can all affect our risk</p>
<p>What are the symptoms?</p>	<p>The signs of heat cramps are painful muscle spasms, often in the legs or abdomen.</p> <p>The signs of heat exhaustion are the skin may feel cool and clammy or moist, and may be either pale or flushed looking. You may also get a headache, nausea, or feel weak and dizzy.</p> <p>The signs of heat stroke are: Red, hot, dry skin. The heat stroke victim has lost the ability to sweat, which is why the skin will be hot and dry; Rapid, weak pulse; Rapid, shallow breathing</p>
<p>How are heat related illnesses treated?</p>	<p>The very first thing is to get out of the heat, even if it is just going to a shady spot. Apply cool, wet towels. Drink cool water. If you reach the symptoms of heat stroke, call 911 right away</p>
<p><i>What can be done to prevent heat related illnesses?</i></p>	<p>All heat related deaths are preventable. Staying in an air conditioned area is the best answer. But, when you can't do that, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drink plenty of water. If you are doing an outdoors activity, drink 2- 4 glasses of at least 16 ounces of cool fluids every hour. Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar, these actually cause you to lose body fluid ○ Avoid strenuous activity ○ Take frequent cool showers or baths ○ Wear lightweight, light colored clothes ○ Limit sun exposure <p>Never, ever, leave children or pets in a parked car. Having any person or pet in a car in the summer months without air conditioning is like putting them in an oven.</p>

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

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